

Taking steps to beat bulge

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ONE in four Aussie kids is overweight – an alarming statistic, especially for a nation that is known for its sporting prowess.

Which is why former Olympic champions Cathy Freeman and Herb Elliott have thrown their support behind the Global Children's Challenge, a program aimed at tackling the obesity epidemic one step at a time.

The program will give 50,000 primary school children a pedometer to measure their daily activity for the event's 50 days.

Teachers input the students' daily step average into a website and the class is moved, as one team, along a virtual walk around the world.

On hand to launch the program last Wednesday were 20 Bronte Public School students. Student Roman told reporters he had recorded 13,365 steps on his pedometer by the middle of the day.

Freeman said obesity posed a serious risk to the health of future generations.

"It is our responsibility as individuals, as parents, teachers, businesses and organisations to do our bit in educating today's youth," Freeman said.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, at least 25 per cent of all children aged between five and 17 do not lead healthy lifestyles. Many are overweight or obese, and if the trend continues, at least one third of Australian children will be at risk of obesity by 2020.

The children's challenge follows on the success of the Global Corporate Challenge, which has been running for seven years in workplaces to get staff active and healthy.

For more information or to register, visit www.gettheworldmoving.com.



Former Olympic medallist Cathy Freeman takes a run with Bronte Public School students at the launch of the Global Children's Challenge.

Photo: ALAN PLACE